



AUSTIN-HEALEY SPRITE

Year of manufacture 1960 **Recorded mileage** 56,981

Asking price £25,000 **Vendor** Fernhurst Motor Co, Fernhurst, Surrey; tel: 01428 653924; www.fernhurst-tvr.co.uk

WHEN IT WAS NEW

Price £632 **Max power** 70bhp **Max torque** 70lb ft (est)

0-60mph 15 secs **Top speed** 90mph **Mpg** 28 (est)

This little cutie was built up by Hardy Engineering, from a California car re-imported in 1995. The Monza front end was cast from the original Speedwell mould and it has a Speedwell-type 995cc engine with hot cam, producing an alleged 70bhp. The Sprite has been in the hands of an enthusiastic Sprite collector, and is only being sold following his passing.

Underneath, it's in good order, with no rot, perfect spring mounts and Waxoyl across all joints and seams. There is slight bubbling at the front of the right-hand sill, which needs attending to before it becomes a problem. The front fits as well as it can, and the ally top, with curved, laminated 'screen (probably A35) is well blended in. It's a replica, but it's topped off with Speedwell badges and Speedwell-type doorhandles. The wheels were new at build, shod with sticky low-profile 175/60x13 Dunlops with lightly scrubbed tread, though the spare is a taller and unused Pirelli.

Inside, it's neat and tidy, with the seats retrimmed in blue vinyl and slightly worn carpets. The dash and headlining are good but the side trims want reattaching – a simple job. The Personal wheel looks out of place, but it's good to hold, and the original wood-rim item comes with the car.

The motor sports an extra steady bar plus an aluminium radiator, with Kenlowe fan, and there's a discreet oil cooler. The coolant is green, the oil still golden and all levels are correct. The engine fires instantly with a little choke, and settles to that throbby hot A-series buzz. It doesn't take long to warm and on the road it's a delight, with direct steering, plus firm brakes helped by the remote MGB servo. It's not super-quick, but fizzes along like a little racer, notably more enthusiastic from 3500rpm up. It's refined for a Midget, but there's a clunk from the left rear corner over potholes, which is not the exhaust (it's too firmly mounted) but a trait of quarter-elliptic-sprung cars. Oil pressure reads a consistent 40psi, and the temperature stays under the 'N' for normal. The car will be sold with 12 months' MoT.



SUMMARY

EXTERIOR

- Straight, with the right amount of shine. And Ferrari indicators!

INTERIOR

- Mostly fine, some needs re-gluing

MECHANICALS

- Well built and all appears fresh

VALUE ★★★★★☆☆☆☆☆

FOR Cheeky looks and a great drive

AGAINST It's more than the sum of its parts – but the uncharitable might remind you of those parts

SHOULD I BUY IT?

It looks expensive at first glance, though a 'new' Ashley GT has just sold at auction for similar money